



Who Is Bill Gates?

James Corbett • 05/01/2020

Part One: How Bill Gates Monopolized Global Health

BILL GATES: Hello. I'm Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft. In this video you're going to see the future.

SOURCE: [*Hello, I'm Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft*](#)

Who is Bill Gates? A software developer? A businessman? A philanthropist? A global health expert?

This question, once merely academic, is becoming a very real question for those who are beginning to realize that Gates' unimaginable wealth has been used to gain control over every corner of the fields of public health, medical research and vaccine development. And now that we are presented with the very problem that Gates has been talking about for years, we will soon find that this software developer with no medical training is going to leverage that wealth into control over the fates of billions of people.

GATES: [. . .] because until we get almost everybody vaccinated globally, we still won't be fully back to normal.

SOURCE: [*Bill Gates on Finding a Vaccine for COVID-19, the Economy, and Returning to 'Normal Life'*](#)

Bill Gates is no public health expert. He is not a doctor, an epidemiologist or an infectious disease researcher. Yet somehow he has become a central figure in the lives of billions of people, presuming to dictate the medical actions that will be required for the world to go "back to normal." The transformation of Bill Gates from computer kingpin to global health czar is as remarkable as it is instructive, and it tells us a great deal about where we are heading as the world plunges into a crisis the likes of which we have not seen before.

This is the story of **How Bill Gates Monopolized Global Health.**

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Until his reinvention as a philanthropist in the past decade, *this* is what many people thought of when they thought of Bill Gates:

NARRATOR: In the case of the United States vs Microsoft, the US Justice Department contended that the software giant had breached antitrust laws by competing unfairly against Netscape Communications in the internet browser market, effectively creating a monopoly. Bill's first concern was that the prosecution could potentially block the release of his company's latest operating system, Windows 98.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates Defends Microsoft in Monopoly Lawsuit](#)

GATES: Are you asking me about when I wrote this e-mail or what are you asking me about?

DAVID BOIES: I'm asking you about January of '96.

GATES: That month?

BOIES: Yes, sir.

GATES: And what about it?

BOIES: What non-Microsoft browsers were you concerned about in January of 96?

GATES: I don't know what you mean: "concerned."

BOIES: What is it about the word "concerned" that you don't understand?

GATES: I'm not sure what you mean by it.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates Deposition](#)

STEVE JOBS: We're going to be working together on Microsoft Office, on Internet Explorer, on Java, and I think that it's going to lead to a very healthy relationship. So it's a package announcement today. We're very, very happy about it, we're very, very excited about it. And I happen to have a special guest with me today via satellite downlink, and if we could get him up on the stage right now.

[BILL GATES APPEARS, CROWD BOOS]

SOURCE: [Macworld Boston 1997-The Microsoft Deal](#)

DAN RATHER: Police and security guards in Belgium were caught flat-footed today by a cowardly sneak attack on one of the world's wealthiest men. The target was Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, arriving for a meeting with community leaders. Watch what happens when a team of hit men meet him first with a pie in the face.

[GATES HIT IN THE FACE WITH PIE]

RATHER: Gates was momentarily and understandably shaken, but he was not injured. The hit squad piled on with two more pies before one of them was wrestled to the ground and arrested; the others—at least for the moment—got away. Gates went inside, wiped his face clean, and made no comment. He then went ahead with his scheduled meeting. No word on the motive for this attack.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates Pie in Face](#)

But, once reviled for the massive wealth and the monopolistic power that his virus-laden software afforded him, Gates is now hailed as a visionary who is leveraging that wealth and power for the greater good of humanity.

KLAUS SCHWAB: If in the 22nd century a book will be written about the entrepreneur of the 21st century [. . .] I'm sure that the person who will foremost come to the mind of those historians is certainly Bill Gates. [applause]

SOURCE: [Davos Annual Meeting 2008 - Bill Gates](#)

ANDREW ROSS SORKIN: I don't think it's hyperbole to say that Bill Gates is singularly—I would argue—the most consequential individual of our generation. I mean that.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates Talks Philanthropy, Microsoft, and Taxes | DealBook](#)

ELLEN DEGENERES: Our next guest is one of the richest and most generous men in the world. Please welcome Bill Gates.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates on Finding a Vaccine for COVID-19, the Economy, and Returning to 'Normal Life'](#)

JUDY WOODRUFF: At a time when everyone is looking to understand the scope of the pandemic and how to minimize the threat, one of the best informed voices is that of businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates.

SOURCE: [Bill Gates on where the COVID-19 pandemic will hurt the most](#)

The process by which this reinvention of Gates' public image took place is not mysterious. It's the same process by which every billionaire has revived their public image since John D. Rockefeller hired Ivy Ledbetter Lee to transform him from the [head of the Standard Oil hydra](#) into the kind old man handing out dimes to strangers.

MAN OFF CAMERA: Don't you give dimes, Mr. Rockefeller? Please, go ahead.

WOMAN: Thank you, sir.

MAN: Thank you very much.

ROCKEFELLER: Thank you for the ride!

MAN: I consider myself more than amply paid.

ROCKEFELLER: Bless you! Bless you! Bless you!

SOURCE: [John D. Rockefeller – Standard Oil](#)

More to the point, John D. Rockefeller knew that to gain the adoration of the public, he had to appear to give them what they want: money. He devoted hundreds of millions of dollars of his vast oil monopoly fortune to establishing institutions that, he claimed, were for the public good. The General Education Board. The Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research. The Rockefeller Foundation.

Similarly, Bill Gates has spent much of the past two decades transforming himself from software magnate into a benefactor of humanity through his own Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In fact, Gates has surpassed Rockefeller's legacy with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation long having eclipsed The Rockefeller Foundation as the largest private foundation in the world, with \$46.8 billion of assets on its books that it wields in its stated program areas of global health and development, global growth, and global policy advocacy.

And, like Rockefeller, Gates' transformation has been helped along by a well-funded public relations campaign. Gone are the theatrical tricks of the PR pioneers—the [ubiquitous ice cream cones](#) of Gates' mentor Warren Buffett are the last remaining holdout of the old Rockefeller-handing-out-dimes gimmick. No, Gates has guided his public image into that of a modern-day saint through an even simpler tactic: buying good publicity.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation spends tens of millions of dollars per year on media partnerships, sponsoring coverage of its program areas across the board. Gates funds *The Guardian's* [Global Development website](#). Gates funds [NPR's global health coverage](#). Gates funds the [Our World in Data website](#) that is tracking the latest statistics and research on the coronavirus pandemic. Gates funds BBC coverage of global health and development issues, both through its [BBC Media Action](#) organization and [the BBC itself](#). Gates funds world health coverage [on ABC News](#).

When the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer was [given a \\$3.5 million Gates foundation grant](#) to set up a special unit to report on global health issues, NewsHour communications chief Rob Flynn was asked about the potential conflict of interest that such a unit would have in reporting on issues that the Gates Foundation is itself involved in. "In some regards I guess you might say that there are not a heck of a lot of things you could touch in global health these days that would not have some kind of Gates tentacle," Flynn responded.

Indeed, it would be almost impossible to find any area of global health that has been left untouched by the tentacles of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

It was Gates who sponsored the meeting that led to the creation of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, a global public-private partnership bringing together state sponsors and big pharmaceutical companies, whose [specific goals](#) include the creation of "healthy markets for vaccines and other

immunisation products." As a founding partner of the alliance, the Gates Foundation provided \$750 million in seed funding and has gone on to make [over \\$4.1 billion](#) in commitments to the group.

Gates [provided the seed money](#) that created the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a public-private partnership that acts as a finance vehicle for governmental AIDS, TB, and malaria programs.

When a public-private partnership of governments, world health bodies and 13 leading pharmaceutical companies came together in 2012 "to accelerate progress toward eliminating or controlling 10 neglected tropical diseases," there was the Gates Foundation with [\\$363 million of support](#).

When the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents was launched in 2015 to leverage billions of dollars in public and private financing for global health and development programs, there was the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a founding partner with a [\\$275 million contribution](#).

When the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations was launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2017 to develop vaccines against emerging infectious diseases, there was the Gates Foundation with an initial [injection of \\$100 million](#).

The examples go on and on. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's fingerprints can be seen on every major global health initiative of the past two decades. And beyond the flashy, billion-dollar global partnerships, the Foundation is behind hundreds of smaller country and region-specific grants—[\\$10 million](#) to combat a locust infestation in East Africa, or [\\$300 million](#) to support agricultural research in Africa and Asia—that add up to billions of dollars in commitments.

It comes as no surprise, then, that—far beyond the [\\$250 million that the Gates Foundation has pledged](#) to the "fight" against coronavirus—every aspect of the current coronavirus pandemic involves organizations, groups and individuals with direct ties to Gates funding.

From the start, the World Health Organization has directed the global response to the current pandemic. From its initial monitoring of the outbreak in Wuhan and its [declaration](#) in January that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission to its live media briefings and its technical guidance on country-level planning and other matters, the WHO has been the body setting the guidelines and recommendations shaping the global response to this outbreak.

But even the World Health Organization itself is largely reliant on funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The WHO's [most recent donor report](#) shows that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the organization's second-largest donor behind the United States government. The Gates Foundation single-handedly contributes more to the world health body than Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Russia and the UK combined.

What's more, current World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is, in fact, like Bill Gates himself, not a medical doctor at all, but the controversial ex-Minister of Health of Ethiopia, who was [accused](#) of covering up three cholera outbreaks in the country during his tenure. Before joining the WHO, he served as chair of the Gates-founded Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and sat on the board of the Gates-founded Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Gates-funded [Stop TB Partnership](#).

The current round of lockdowns and restrictive stay-home orders in western countries was enacted on the back of alarming models predicting millions of deaths in the United States and hundreds of thousands in the UK.

HAYLEY MINOGUE: Imperial College in London released a COVID-19 report and that's where most of our US leaders are getting the information they're basing their decision making on. That 2.2 million deaths also doesn't account for the potential negative effects of health systems being overwhelmed.

[. . .]

The report runs us through a few different ways this could turn out depending on what our responses are. If we don't do anything to control this virus, over 80% of people in the US would be infected over the course of the epidemic, with 2.2 million deaths from COVID-19.

SOURCE: [*Extreme measures based on scientific paper*](#)

BORIS JOHNSON: From this evening I must give the British people a very simple instruction: you must stay at home.

SOURCE: [*Boris Johnson announces complete UK lockdown amid coronavirus crisis*](#)

JUSTIN TRUDEAU: Enough is enough. Go home and stay home.

SOURCE: [*'Enough is enough', Trudeau with a strong message to Canadians*](#)

GAVIN NEWSOM: . . . a statewide order for people to stay at home

SOURCE: [*California Gov Newsom issues statewide 'SAFER AT HOME' order*](#)

The work of two research groups was crucial in shaping the decision of the UK and US governments to implement wide-ranging lockdowns, and, in turn, governments around the world. The first group, the Imperial College COVID-19 Research Team, [issued a report](#) on March 16th that predicted up to 500,000 deaths in the UK and 2.2 million deaths in the US unless strict government measures were put in place.

The second group, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Bill Gates' home state of Washington, [helped provide data](#) that corroborated the White House's [initial estimates](#) of the virus' effects, estimates that have been [repeatedly downgraded](#) as the situation has progressed.

Unsurprisingly, the Gates Foundation has injected substantial sums of money into both groups. This year alone, the Gates Foundation has already given [\\$79 million](#) to Imperial College, and in 2017 the Foundation [announced](#) a [\\$279 million](#) investment into the IHME to expand its work collecting health data and creating models.

Anthony Fauci, meanwhile, has [become the face](#) of the US government's coronavirus response, echoing Bill Gates' assertion that the country will not "get back to normal" until "a good vaccine" can be found to insure the public's safety.

ANTHONY FAUCI: If you want to get to pre-coronavirus . . . You know, that might not ever happen, in the sense of the fact that the threat is there. But I believe with the

therapies that will be coming online and with the fact that I feel confident that over a period of time we will get a good vaccine, that we will never have to get back to where we are right back now.

SOURCE: [Dr. Anthony Fauci on return to normalcy from pandemic](#)

Beyond just their frequent [collaborations](#) and [cooperation](#) in the past, Fauci has direct ties to Gates' projects and funding. In 2010, he was appointed to the [Leadership Council](#) of the Gates-founded "[Decade of Vaccines](#)" project to implement a Global Vaccine Action Plan—a project to which Gates committed \$10 billion of funding. And in October of last year, just as the current pandemic was beginning, the Gates Foundation [announced](#) a \$100 million contribution to the National Institute of Health to help, among other programs, Fauci's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' research into HIV.

Also in October of last year, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnered with the World Economic Forum and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security to stage [Event 201](#), a tabletop exercise gauging the economic and societal impact of a globally-spreading coronavirus pandemic.

NARRATOR: It began in healthy-looking pigs months, perhaps years, ago: a new coronavirus.

ANITA CICERO: The mission of the pandemic emergency board is to provide recommendations to deal with the major global challenges arising in response to an unfolding pandemic. The board is comprised of highly experienced leaders from business public health and civil society.

TOM INGLESBY: We're at the start of what's looking like it will be a severe pandemic and there are problems emerging that can only be solved by global business and governments working together.

STEPHEN REDD: Governments need to be willing to do things that are out of their historical perspective, or . . . for the most part. It's really a war footing that we need to be on.

SOURCE: [Event 201 Pandemic Exercise: Highlights Reel](#)

Given the incredible reach that the tentacles of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have into every corner of the global health markets, it should not be surprising that the foundation has been intimately involved with every stage of the current pandemic crisis, either. In effect, Gates has merely used the wealth from his domination of the software market to leverage himself into a similar position in the world of global health.

The whole process has been cloaked in the mantle of selfless philanthropy, but the foundation is not structured as a charitable endeavour. Instead, it maintains a dual structure: the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation distributes money to grantees, but a separate entity, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Trust, manages the endowment assets. These two entities often have overlapping interests, and, as has been noted many times in the past, grants given by the foundation often directly benefit the value of the trust's assets:

MELINDA GATES: One of my favorite parts of my job at the Gates Foundation is that I get to travel to the developing world, and I do that quite regularly.

[. . .]

My first trip in India, I was in a person's home where they had dirt floors, no running water, no electricity, and that's really what I see all over the world. So in short, I'm startled by all the things that they don't have. But I am surprised by one thing that they do have: Coca-Cola. Coke is everywhere. In fact, when I travel to the developing world, Coke feels ubiquitous.

And so when I come back from these trips, and I'm thinking about development, and I'm flying home and I'm thinking, we're trying to deliver condoms to people, or vaccinations, you know? Coke's success kind of stops and makes you wonder: How is it that they can get Coke to these far-flung places? If they can do that, why can't governments and NGOs do the same thing?

SOURCE: [*Melinda French Gates: What nonprofits can learn from Coca-Cola*](#)

AMY GOODMAN: And the charity of billionaire Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda is under criticism following the disclosure it's substantially increased its holdings in the agribusiness giant Monsanto to over \$23 million. Critics say the investment in Monsanto contradicts the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's stated commitment to helping farmers and sustainable development in Africa.

SOURCE: [*Gates Foundation Criticized for Increasing Monsanto Investment*](#)

LAURENCE LEE: The study from the pressure group Global Justice now paints a picture of the Gates Foundation partly as an expression of corporate America's desire to profit from Africa and partly a damning critique of its effects.

POLLY JONES: You could have a case where the initial research is done by a Gates-funded institution. And the media reporting on how well that research is conducted is done, the media outlet is a Gates-funded outlet, or maybe a Gates-funded journalist from a media program. And then the program is implemented more widely by a Gates-funded NGO. I mean . . . There are some very insular circles here.

LEE: Among the many criticisms: the idea that private finance can solve the problems of the developing world. Should poor farmers be trapped into debt by having to use chemicals or fertilizers underwritten by offshoot of the foundation?

SOURCE: [*Gates Foundation accused of exploiting its leverage in Africa*](#)

This is no mere theoretical conflict of interest. Gates is held up as a hero for donating \$35.8 billion worth of his Microsoft stock to the foundation, but during the course of his "Decade of Vaccines," Gates' net worth has actually doubled, from [\\$54 billion](#) to [\\$103.1 billion](#).

The Rockefeller story provides an instructive template for this vision of tycoon-turned-philanthropist. When Rockefeller faced a public backlash, he helped spearhead the creation of a system of private foundations that connected in with his business interests. Leveraging his unprecedented oil monopoly fortune into unprecedented control over wide swaths of public life, Rockefeller was able to kill two birds with one stone: molding society in his family's own interests, even as he became a beloved figure in the public imagination.

Similarly, Bill Gates has leveraged his software empire into a global health, development and education empire, steering the course of investment and research and ensuring healthy markets for vaccines and other immunization products. And, like Rockefeller, Gates has been transformed from the feared and reviled head of a formidable hydra into a kindly old man generously giving his wealth back to the public.

But not everyone has been taken in by this PR trick. Even *The Lancet* observed this worrying transformation from software monopolist to health monopolist back in 2009, when the extent of this Gates-led monopoly was becoming apparent to all:

The first guiding principle of the [Bill & Melinda Gates] Foundation is that it is “driven by the interests and passions of the Gates family.” An annual letter from Bill Gates summarises those passions, referring to newspaper articles, books, and chance events that have shaped the Foundation's strategy. For such a large and influential investor in global health, is such a whimsical governance principle good enough?

SOURCE: [*What has the Gates Foundation done for global health?*](#)

This brings us back to the question: Who is Bill Gates? What are his driving interests? What motivates his decisions?

These are not academic questions. Gates' decisions have controlled the flows of billions of dollars, formed international partnerships pursuing wide-ranging agendas, ensured the creation of "healthy markets" for Big Pharma vaccine manufacturers. And now, as we are seeing, his decisions are shaping the entire global response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Next week, we will further explore Gates' vaccination initiatives, the business interests behind them, and the larger agenda that is beginning to take shape as we enter the "new normal" of the COVID-19 crisis.